

New Shelter Luther Street Oxford Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

19th November 2003

Client: Ridge

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 1599

Planning Ref N^o: 99/48/NFH

NGR: SP 5140 0575

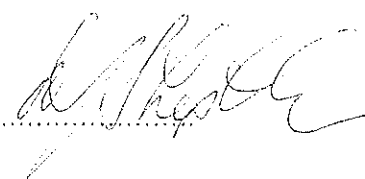
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Night Shelter, Luther Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover Plate: Working shot looking to the north-west.

SUMMARY

From October to November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Night Shelter, Luther Street, Oxford (NGR SP 5140 0575). The work was commissioned by Ridge in advance of the construction of a new larger night shelter building. The watching brief revealed cultivated soil overlying river silts, which had been truncated by 20th century construction.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From October to November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Night Shelter, Luther Street, Oxford (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ridge in respect of a planning application for a new larger night shelter building linking to the present medical centre (Planning Application No. 99/48/NFH).
- 1.1.2 An advice note requiring an archaeological watching brief on the development was prepared by Brian Durham, the City's Archaeologist on behalf of Oxford City Council.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the note (OA 2002).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The area of proposed development lies about 100 m north of the River Thames and c 1 km north-west of its confluence with the Cherwell. It is situated on the floodplain on the first river terrace gravels and the underlying geology is Oxford Clay.
- 1.2.2 The area between the rivers contains a complex pattern of watercourses, which has altered considerably since the prehistoric period. There are many natural islands in the Thames creating several different channels, some of which were already silted up by the 11th century. Many of the smaller streams that existed have disappeared and others now run through artificial culverts. These streams were exploited by mills during the medieval and early post-medieval periods.
- 1.2.3 The area of proposed development is surrounded on three sides by late 20th century developments. To the south is the remaining building from an early 20th century school. The site is currently occupied by a converted, brick-built school building from the same period. The north-west corner is joined to a modern health centre. The land lies at about 55 m OD and there is a very gentle slope towards the south.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2002) and is reproduced below.

- 1.3.2 Prehistoric and Roman: no archaeological sites or finds from the prehistoric and Roman periods are known from the area of proposed development. The model developed for the river channels (OA, Before the University, forthcoming) suggests that until the Late Bronze Age, the proposed development site probably lay either within or possibly on the edge of the principal course of the Thames. Alluvial deposits are recorded from several excavations close to the site, including those at 65 St Aldate's and in the area around the priory buildings.
- 1.3.3 Medieval: The development site lies outside and to the south of the early medieval town defences. Evidence for pre-Conquest settlement has been located close to the line of St Aldates to the east on the street frontage. Later, the development site lay between Blackfriars Priory on the west and the tenements that lined Grandpont on the east and almost certainly within the holdings of the Priory. Agas's depiction of the site as open ground, probably meadowland, reflects the disposition of the site during this time. The Blackfriars Mill stream, generally thought to have formed the eastern edge of the priory holdings during the medieval period, may pass near the site.
- 1.3.4 Post-medieval and modern: The post-medieval use the area of the proposed development appears to have been market gardens. Loggan (1675) showed the area of the proposed development divided by a number of small garden walls. Development of the area began in the early 19th century although the area of the proposed development itself was not developed until the late 1830s. The present building was constructed in 1910.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 After the old shelter building was demolished its deep foundations were removed and the site filled and levelled with crush brick and stone to provide a piling matt (Fig. 2). A number of site visits were carried out to monitor the ground works.
- 2.2.2 A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The foundations for the old shelter building were deep concrete pads with concrete beams laid across the top of the pads. The pads were set to a depth of 3 m below the ground surface (Fig. 3, Plate 1). These pads cut into a very dark grey silty clay,

which was overlain by a 1 m thick layer of cultivated dark grey brown silty sand loam topsoil. Overlying this was a 0.7 - 1 m demolition and construction layer from the construction of the building in 1910 (Fig. 3).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the watching brief exposed a thick silty clay, which appeared to be alluvial river deposits. These had been sealed below a thick layer of cultivated garden soil, possibly from the market gardens shown on Loggan (1675) map of the city. This layer was sealed below a layer of construction debris from the groundworks during the construction of the now demolished building on the site.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2002 *Oxford Night Shelter, Luther Street, Oxford* Written Scheme of Investigation

OAU 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition August 1992)

APPENDIX 2 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Night Shelter, Luther Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire

Site code: OXLUTH 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 5140 0575

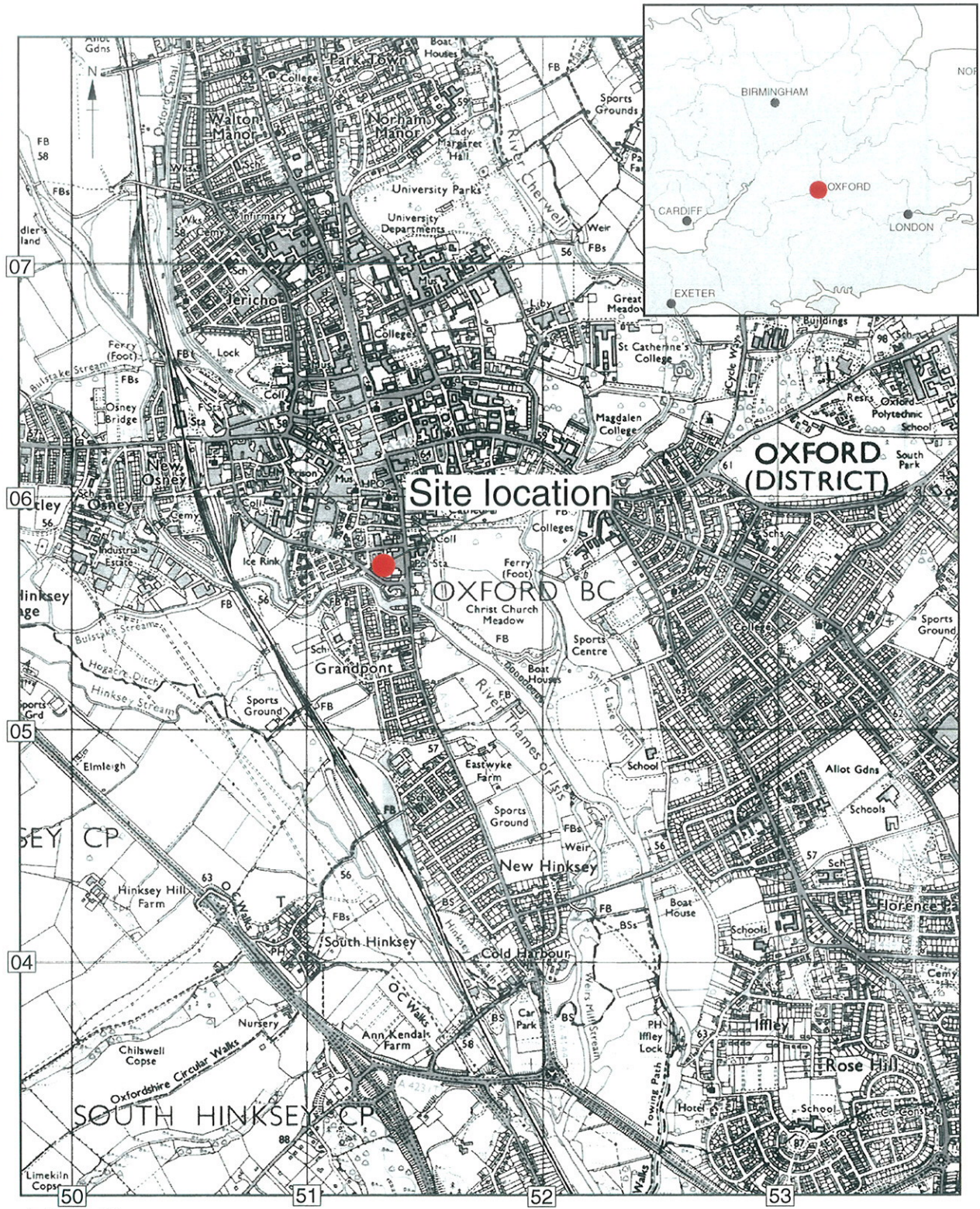
Type of watching brief: Groundwork removing old foundations prior to the laying of the piling matt.

Date and duration of project: Four site visits from the 16/10/2003 to 17/11/2003.

Area of site: 40 m x 20 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed cultivated soil overlying river silts, both of which had been truncated by 20th century construction.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2002.230



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

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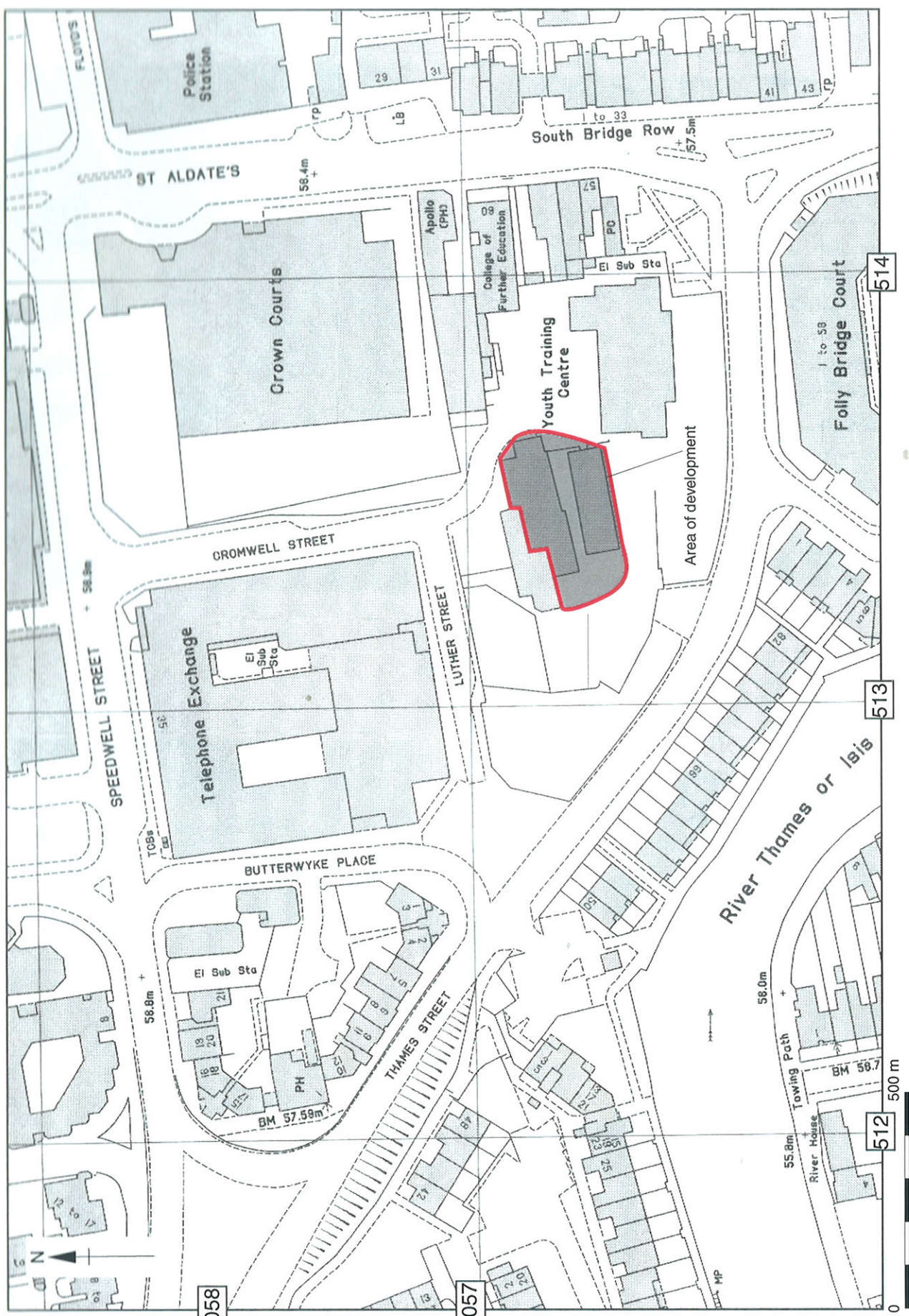


Figure 2: Site plan



Plate 1: Depth of concrete pads. Pad still remaining in left end of trench



Plate 2: Working shot. Clearing out foundations



Plates 3 and 4: Reducing ground without foundations, prior to piling matt

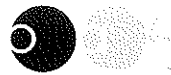




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